

VZCZCXRO4243
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHJM #2583 3520859
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 180859Z DEC 07 ZDK
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0047
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002583

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR
GOLDBERGER/SHAMPAINE/BELGRADE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/PASCUAL;
TREASURY FOR SZUBIN/GRANT/HARRIS/NUGENT/HIRSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/17

TAGS: [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [KFTN](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KWBG](#)

SUBJECT: PA CONTINUES TO SCRUTINIZE ALMS COMMITTEES AND NGOS

REF: A. JERUSALEM 2169

[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 1820

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Thomas Duffy, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: The Palestinian Authority (PA) continues to demand the restructuring of Zakat (alms) committees and strict adherence to regulations governing NGOs. The Ministry of Awqaf has dismantled some 92 Zakat committees in the past three months and reformulated district committees. The Ministry of Interior (MoI) has dissolved over 130 of the 350 NGOs reviewed, thus far, for lack of legal and financial compliance with the PA law, according to MoI officials. The MoI would welcome technical support. Hamas has complained that PA actions are intended to weaken the organization. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) PA Minister of Information Riad al-Malki announced December 3 that, since the launch of an October 2007 initiative directed at suspect Zakat committees (ref a), the Ministry of Awqaf has dismantled 92 Zakat committees throughout the West Bank. Malki stated publicly that Hamas had "transformed Zakat committees into financial empires to serve their political ends and means." Prime Minister Fayyad chaired a meeting December 4 of the Central Zakat Committee, composed of newly appointed members of 11 reformulated Zakat district committees from the West Bank. According to local press reports, Minister of Awqaf Jamal Bawatneh reiterated to the participants that the restructuring requirements are intended to ensure that these committees work to benefit needy people and not serve factional interests. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said that PA measures are "an attempt to weaken Hamas," and "Palestinians will pay the price" from the loss of services provided by the dissolved committees.

[1](#)3. (C) MoI Director General of the Public Admissions Office for NGOs Fadwa al-Sha'ar told ConGenoffs December 4 that she and her staff have completed the review of 350 of the 3,000 NGO files held by the ministry (ref b). Each file undergoes separate legal and financial reviews. Only 3 or 4 of those files examined were determined to be in full compliance with MoI regulations governing NGOs, according to Sha'ar. Over 130 have been closed, some of which existed only on paper. Sha'ar said most of the remaining NGOs reviewed, thus far, have been sent warning letters giving them three months to fix any problems. They have two months to appeal a closure order. Sha'ar noted that enforcement in Gaza is "complicated" because the MoI no longer operates there. Files of many of the well-established Gaza NGOs, however, have been forwarded to her office, but even some these have

significant problems. While not characterizing MoI efforts as specifically targeting Hamas, Sha'ar was particularly critical of religious NGOs, which she suggested manipulated sympathy for children and orphans and also "train people to be beggars."

14. (C) Sha'ar described the challenges posed by the MoI's review of all existing NGO permits for legal and financial compliance. She said efforts to modernize her office's operations to improve efficiency and enhance monitoring have been thwarted by lack of equipment, customized software, and trained staff. Sha'ar said technical assistance from the donor community would be welcome.

DUFFY